

Amendments to the Claims

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-10 (canceled).

Claim 11 (new): A device for monitoring a gas volume in a unit filled with a liquid, the unit having an inflow line with at least one expansion vessel, the device comprising:

a stationary shaft mounted in the expansion vessel;
at least one buoyant body floating in the liquid, said buoyant body being connected to said shaft and pivotally mounted with respect to said shaft.

Claim 12 (new): The device according to claim 11, which comprises a connecting element connecting said buoyant body to said shaft at a spacing distance from said shaft.

Claim 13 (new): The device according to claim 12, which comprises a stationary force transducer disposed to detect a torque on said connecting element at a predetermined distance from a pivot point defined by said shaft.

Claim 14 (new): The device according to claim 13, which further comprises a processing device connected to receive a signal generated by said force

transducer, and wherein, if a predetermined torque is exceeded as measured in said force transducer, said processing device generates a warning message.

Claim 15 (new): The device according to claim 11, wherein said at least one buoyant body is one of a plurality of buoyant bodies disposed at defined vertical levels, said shaft is one of a plurality of mutually parallel shafts and said buoyant bodies are respectively offset from one another with respect to said shafts, and said buoyant bodies are formed of mutually different sizes and/or densities.

Claim 16 (new): The device according to claim 12, which further comprises a stationary protractor disposed to measure an angle between said connecting element and a horizontal axis extending transversely to said shaft.

Claim 17 (new): The device according to claim 16, which further comprises a processing device connected to receive a signal from said protractor, and wherein, when a predetermined angle of said connecting element is exceeded, said processing device generates a warning signal.

Claim 18 (new): The device according to claim 11, which further comprises a stationary protractor disposed to detect an inclination of said buoyant body relative to a horizontal.

Claim 19 (new): The device according to claim 18, which further comprises a processing device connected to receive a signal from said protractor, and

wherein, when a predetermined inclination of said buoyant body is exceeded, said processing device generates a warning signal.

Claim 20 (new): The device according to claim 11, which comprises additional elements selected from the group consisting of capacitive elements, inductive elements, and optical elements associated with said buoyant body and configured to generate respective electromagnetic, electrical, or optical signals, and a processing device connected to receive the signals generated by said elements.

Claim 21 (new): A method for monitoring a gas volume in a unit filled with a liquid, the method which comprises:

providing the unit with an inflow line and at least one expansion vessel;
providing a buoyant body floating in or on the liquid in the expansion vessel, with the buoyant body being pivotally connected to a stationary shaft, and detecting a pivoting movement of the floating body with respect to the shaft.

Claim 22 (new): The method according to claim 21, which comprises fixing the shaft at a defined vertical level within the expansion vessel as determined on a basis of a maximum gas volume to be detected relative to an inner surface of a top cover of the expansion vessel.

Claim 23 (new): The method according to claim 21, which comprises mounting the shaft with a fixing device at predetermined vertical levels within the expansion vessel.